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SUBJECT: SPAIN'S RULING SOCIALIST PARTY SUFFERS SETBACK IN  
EU PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

MADRID 00000553 001.2 OF 002

¶1. SUMMARY. In the June 7 European Parliament elections, the opposition Partido Popular gained an edge over President Zapatero's ruling Socialist Party (23-21 seats). With 46 percent participation, Spain compares favorably with other European Union countries in terms of voter turn-out. While the Socialists trailed by 3.7 percent in the vote tally, they claim the results are "relatively positive" and reflective of the global economic downturn rather than any specific criticism of President Zapatero. With plenty of time to redirect the situation before the 2012 general elections, Zapatero and his team are not expected to make any immediate shifts in response to the election results, particularly since Zapatero shuffled his cabinet in advance of the elections. END SUMMARY.

¶2. Spain's June 7 European Parliament elections resulted in the following distribution of seats:

PP or Partido Popular (conservative, current opposition party) 23  
PSOE or Partido Socialista Obrero Espanol (socialist, current governing party) 21  
CEU or Coalicion por Europa (coalition of Convergencia i Unio and Partido Nacionalista Vasco) 2  
IU or Izquierda Unida (in coalition with other minor leftist parties ICV-EUiA-BA) 2  
UPyD or Union Progreso y Democracia (progressive party) 1  
Edp-V or Europa de los Pueblos (coalition of Catalan, Basque and Aragonese separatist parties) 1

Forty-six percent of eligible Spanish voters cast a ballot, a slight increase over the 45.14 percent participation in the 2004 European elections in Spain. Spanish leaders from both parties claim this year's participation demonstrates that Spain is actively participating in European politics; average European voter participation was 43 percent. For purposes of comparison, turnout in Spain's last general election (2008) was 74 percent.

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PP Claims Vote Reflects PSOE's Ineffectiveness  
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¶3. In celebrating what PP leader Mariano Rajoy described as a mandate for change by an "immense majority of Spaniards," the PP has claimed this election to be an precursor to a potential victory in the 2012 general elections. Media reports claim this election has at least given Rajoy "room to breathe" after months of negative press highlighting charges of PP corruption and calls for a change of leadership after he lost the 2008 Presidential campaign. It also comes on top of the PP's success in recapturing Galicia from the PSOE in March 1 regional elections. The PP attributes its victory to

citizen's anger with the PSOE's management of the economic crisis and other affairs. Of note, the two autonomous communities where the PP battled the most prominent corruption charges, Madrid and Valencia, are also the communities in which it won the greatest number of votes.

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PSOE Maintains that Election ResultCQ%Z;mRQ.a EX.b"  
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¶4. PSOE,s Secretary for Organization Leire Pajin claims that the results are "reasonably positive," and that they are "the best" for a socialist party in Europe. The PSOE is also discounting the election results as indicative of general frustration with the economic crisis, noting that other European leaders were even more negatively affected by the global downturn. While the PSOE trailed the PP by 3.7 percent in the vote tally, the party is taking this result as a warning sign to remain focused on economic recovery and x4%Q QGeneral and chief party strategist, Jose "Pepe" Blanco, said that the results were an aberration and that the PP shouldn't start celebrating in anticipation of 2012 since there are ample precedents of parties winning municipal elections and then losing the general elections the following year.

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No Immediate Shifts Anticipated as Zapatero Anticipates Spain's EU Presidency  
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¶5. There is plenty of time before the 2012 general elections and President Zapatero and his advisors are counting on an upswing in the economy and perhaps an afterglow from Spain's January-June 2010 EU Presidency to boost PSOE's credibility

MADRID 00000553 002.2 OF 002

and popularity during the interim. The next electoral contest will be the regional elections in Catalonia in November 2010. In their campaign rhetoric, both the PSOE and the PP attempted to associate their candidates and politicians with President Obama in an effort to demonstrate that their party could ensure Spain's prestige and relevance in global affairs.

CHACON